

Volunteers key to Red Cross efforts worldwide

By **Barbara L. Sellers**
Northwest Guardian

March is American Red Cross Month, and it's this time of year the organization focuses on recruiting volunteers and increasing awareness about the many services it provides.

"Our main role is to verify and pass emergency or important information to commanders and Soldiers," said Linda Gentzyel, assistant station manager at Waller Hall.

"A message could be about a serious illness or death of an immediate family member, or the birth of a baby," she said. "Commanders make decisions based on the contents of our messages. They trust us, so all information must be verified with a reliable source before it is released for notification."

Volunteer service is another important role the organization provides throughout the United States, the world.

"We offer emergency assistance to Soldiers and family members whenever a disaster strikes, such as a fire, flood or earthquake," Gentzyel said. "Whether it's on a small or large scale, the American Red Cross provides emergency food, water, shelter, and assists people in locat-



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Volunteer Don Mathis answers the phone at the information booth in the Medical Mall at Madigan Army Medical Center.

ing missing family members."

Since last July, she said there were 423 registered volunteers at Fort Lewis, Madigan Army Medical Center and McChord Air Force Base, but it averages out to be about 200 active volunteers per month.

"Some of them provide free drinks and snacks for Soldiers leaving or returning

from deployments at the Soldier Readiness Program site at Fort Lewis and the U.S. Army Troop Deployment Facility at McChord," Gentzyel said. "Our volunteers work in various capacities throughout the installation, but they mostly work at Madigan."

Volunteers at MAMC work at the information booth, help escort patients from one room to another and help out in numerous other capacities throughout the hospital.

If a military spouse has a baby while her husband is deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom, the American Red Cross has a program for her, too.

"In partnership with 'Spencers,' as a special thank you for serving our country, they will provide a free custom-designed layette of clothing, which includes miscellaneous clothing items for the new baby," Gentzyel said. "We work as a liaison between the company and the Soldier."

Still another American Red Cross volunteer program is geared toward youths, with volunteer work, such as walking dogs, at places such as the Stray Animal Facility at Fort Lewis.

"We are now looking for young volunteers (age 14 and up) for our summer

Red Cross at a glance

1881 – Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross.

1943 – President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared March as Red Cross month.

months (June, July and August)," she said. "This provides a wonderful opportunity for young people to develop working relationships and learn job ethics. Gaining some experiences in various jobs can also help our young volunteers get a better feel for what they want to do for a future career."

Additionally, the American Red Cross offers a career opportunity specifically for military spouses.

"In conjunction with the dental facility at McChord, we offer a volunteer dental assistant training program," Gentzyel said.

The program provides free training, both book learning and hands on, said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leticia Johnson, NCOIC of the clinical dentistry element, McChord AFB.

"We have about two classes per year and take five students per class, so we

have about 10 slots per year," Johnson said. "Our students must complete 1,000 clinical hours to graduate."

The program gives its graduates enough basic knowledge so that they can then apply for paying jobs. They still must get additional specialized training and pass a state test to become certified dental assistants, she said.

A third role of the American Red Cross involves health and safety.

"We offer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) classes, baby-sitting classes for youth, First Aid classes and disaster preparedness training courses through our Tacoma chapter," Gentzyel said.

To register for one of those classes, call (253) 474-0600.

"We also conduct free American Red Cross briefings for units, family readiness groups and other organizations on post," Gentzyel said.

"Part of what we talk about is how to initiate a Red Cross message and how that entire process works."

Any unit that would like to schedule an American Red Cross briefing can call 966-3889.

"We usually conduct these briefings in conjunction with unit deployments, but we will do them anytime," Gentzyel said.

Protecting front-load washing machines during moves a wise investment

For the Northwest Guardian

Ever sat in a laundromat, watching through the washer's glass portal as your clothes tumbled in sudsy water? That machine was a front-loading washer, and we used to only see them in laundromats. But more and more families use front-loading washers at home, too.

Front-loading washers are expensive appliances. Prices can range from \$700 to \$1,800 or more. Regardless of the price, many consumers are willing to pay more up front to gain energy savings over the life of the machine.

Families who own front-loading washers need to protect these expensive appliances. That can be a challenge if

you move often, as our military families do.

Local officials say that military owners of front-loading washers can help protect their investment by saving the original shipping bolts, spacers, and wrenches provided with the machine.

"When you install a new front-loading washer, you will find several shipping bolts," said Air Force Master Sgt. Anthony J. Kelly of the Fort Lewis Joint Personal Property Shipping Office. "These secure the drum during shipping to avoid damaging the washer's internal mechanisms."

That's where saving those materials gets important.

"To avoid damage during a later

move," Kelly said, "you will need to re-attach those same bolts."

Top-loading washers must be secured for shipping as well, but that is easily done with commonly available foam or other packing material. When movers pack a top-loading washer, they use a special material called "washer pack" to secure the washer's drum and agitator.

But, according to Kelly, movers don't have replacement bolts to secure a front-loading washer for moving.

"If you lose the shipping bolts and special wrench," Kelly said, "you will have to contact the manufacturer to replace them."

It isn't a simple matter of just picking up what you need locally.

"These items generally are not available at hardware or appliance stores," Kelly said. "If you have to move on a short deadline, you might not have time to wait for the bolts to arrive from the manufacturer."

So the best advice is to save the original shipping bolts.

"After installing a front-loading washer, simply place the shipping bolts, spacers, and wrench in a small bag. Label the bag and store it with the washing machine instructions, or affix the bag to the machine where it won't interfere with its operation," Kelly suggested.

It is also a good idea to let JPPSO know you have a front-loader when you make your move application.

"Let the personal property counselor know you have a front-loading washer," Kelly said. "This is a good time to make sure you have the necessary bolts, spacers, and wrench."

"When the movers call or visit to conduct their pre-move survey, make sure they also know you have a front-loading washer and whether or not you have the required shipping bolts."

So, if you now own, or are thinking of buying one of those top-of-the-line, front-loading washing machines, hang on to the shipping materials. That simple act can help you avoid damage to your expensive appliance — and save you from last-minute delays and unnecessary trouble when moving.